

**A HANDY GUIDE TO...**

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP &  
ENGAGEMENT WITHIN CLUBS  
& LEAGUES**



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## SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL

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If we are to build a bright future for football, we need to ensure the voice of young players, coaches, referees and volunteers is reflected in our work

The FA has the privilege and responsibility of overseeing football in England as a whole. Working together with County FAs across the country, we want everyone to have the opportunity to play and develop their love of the game.

We do this by working to create an environment in which football can flourish, supporting the delivery of quality provision, promoting diversity and regulating the sport for everyone to enjoy.

We are proud to support football for all and are here for all the players and volunteers who make up the game across the country.

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*"Youth leadership has allowed me to develop both personally and professionally. Through youth leadership I have been able to impact not only my community but the wider community as well."*

*- Amrit Singh Bains, FA Youth Council Alumni*

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There are over 11 million young people aged under 18 in England and 20 million under 25.

Current projections suggest these figures will continue to rise and over the next 5-10 years young people will comprise a larger proportion of the population than any previous generation. Our figures indicate that youth football continues to thrive with well over 60,000 teams affiliated in England. However, the health of grassroots football is dependent on its volunteers and there are real concerns around the renewal of an ageing (and retiring) volunteer workforce.

There is a need to encourage and embed an ethos of community volunteering in a younger generation and bring these young people through into leadership positions in the community football structures of clubs and leagues. The benefits of developing youth participation is often framed in terms of an investment in the future of the game, but it is important to recognise that youth participation in multiple settings as volunteers and leaders provides an array of benefits in the here and now.

This generation of young people emerging are more connected to each other and to information than previous generations.

They have new skills and approaches that have the potential to transform the way in which the game is run, organised and developed.

The FA's commitment to the value of this approach is set out in the Youth Charter as below, and we would encourage our County Football Associations, grassroots clubs, leagues and other Football Partners to undertake a similar exercise to consider how the potential of young people can be harnessed for the good of football.. These are practical case studies – undertaken by clubs, leagues and County football Associations – just like yours. They illustrate what the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of young people can contribute to the current and future health of football.

We hope that this document gives you a starting point to understand and increase youth engagement and leadership at your club or league and by taking these first steps to integrate young people you can join us in working to secure a healthy future for football in your area.

**Dermot Collins**  
**FA National Development Manager**  
**Youth Football**



# THE FA'S YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHARTER

## *The FA's promise to young people aged 16-25*

Young people aren't just the leaders of tomorrow. They have the energy, skills and ideas to change football and the wider community for the better today. The FA wants to establish a culture of involving young people (16-25 years) in the organisation of football. This approach will benefit young people, promote better informed and more representative decision making, and bring through a new generation of volunteers into the workforce across the grassroots game. For this approach to work it needs to be based on genuine youth-adult partnerships.

The FA and its Youth Council will also work with its County Associations and our football partners to encourage a similar commitment and approach across the Country.

To achieve this, we will consult and involve young people. We will promote the concept and benefits of youth leadership and volunteering within the FA and with our football partners. We will deliver programmes and events created, directed and staffed by young people that demonstrate this commitment.





# A GOLDEN THREAD

From grassroots to The FA Boardroom, there is a pathway in place supporting young people who are stepping forwards to lead in their communities to progress into County FA and FA structures.

The golden thread through it all, is authentic and meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute and be heard on matters which impact young people. To be consulted and involved where possible to ensure the game is appropriate for those part-taking today and in the future.

## County FA Youth Councils

Most County FAs operate a Youth Council, or similar forum to ensure young people have a voice on matters impacting them within football on a local level.

The role of the group varies based on local needs and County FA objectives, with some counties involving young people within their governance systems.

## The FA National Youth Council

Has a vision for all young people to have meaningful opportunities to develop themselves and positively impact the football community.

The FA Youth Council is made up of 14 young people aged 16-25 who are a consultancy body for the FA who develop and deliver opportunities working towards their vision.



@TheFA\_NYC



# WHY?

The FA have made a commitment to young people and the future of our game.

Having a clear 'why' for our work ensures that all decisions are made with the best interest of those who will be at the heart of them.

Starting with why, the point at which typically we end with. Outlining your reason for existing, and purpose for engaging with and providing young people with a voice will help to determine the steps you take and any activities. Clubs and leagues exist to allow for football to be played and enjoyed by everyone associated. As mentioned already over 70% of grassroots football is played by under 25s, a statistic which isn't replicated off the field.

Whilst the majority of people could say what a club or league does, few could really clearly state why. By starting with why we should involve young people, benefits to club/ league/ wider game the actions which follow will develop opportunities for that reasoning to come to life, with relevant tasks being used for the purposes built by your club or league.

# ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

Different scenarios might require different levels of participation and engagement from young people within your club or league. The differing intention will inform the activities and opportunities which you wish to provide.

Using the descriptions [right] you will be able to consider where any of your current practices fit. Suggesting young people have an input into decision making or any genuine role within the club or league, but then not listening to them or utilising their experience would be a waste of time and could make young people feel unvalued, disillusioned and not want to help with any future opportunities.

The Ladder of Participation can be used as reference to guide you through developing your methods for engaging with young people which are relevant and aligned to your why.



## **8 – Youth Initiated shared decisions with adults**

Youth led activities, with youth and adults sharing decision making as equal partners

## **7 – Youth initiated and directed**

Youth led activities with little input from adults.

## **6 – Adult initiated shared decisions with youth**

Adult-led activities in which decision making is shared with youth

## **5 – Consulted & Informed**

Adult-led activities, youth consulted and informed about outcomes of adult decisions

## **4 – Assigned, but informed**

Adult-led activities in which youth understand the purpose and decision-making process.

## **1, 2 & 3 – Manipulation, Decoration & Tokenism**

Adult-led activities in which youth are directed without understanding or input with minimal opportunities for feedback



# YOUTH VOICE & VOLUNTEERING

The role football can and does play beyond players on the pitch – it is an opportunity which we harbor to do more.

From here this guidance is split into Youth Voice and Youth Volunteering, both have different intent and at times overlap.

## Youth Voice

Giving young people the opportunity to have a say on matters which impact them. Youth Voice activities have the purpose of asking and listening to young people. This isn't to say the views of young people should be taken as absolute; however, they should be able to work alongside adults to express their views and be taken seriously.

As set out below, consultation and involvement can come in a variety of formats depending on what fits best for you, and what information you are trying to source. This is also dependent on the amount of time available to invest in these activities, however, more time invested leads to meaningful engagement and robust feedback which has been thought through.

## Youth Volunteering

Youth volunteering moves towards young people taking on roles within your club or league, supporting the running of the club within an official capacity. Roles which perhaps comes following consultation around what would make the club better, youth committee members or representatives. Board members. Coaches and team managers. Social media officers. Club-Play Liaison officers. There are so many ways in which young people can use their enthusiasm and expertise to support the club or league in achieving their purpose, staying relevant and being sustainable.

## Clarity of purpose

Before setting out on your journey into youth leadership, engagement and volunteering. Consider your intent, why you want to involve young people and how that can be achieved through meaningful and authentic opportunities.

# SAFEGUARDING

We want football to be a safe, fun and inclusive experience for all

The first priority of any youth club should be the wellbeing of the young people taking part. If you or those around you are not having a positive experience, you need to tell someone about it.

There are a number of people within your club and outside of it that could help if you have a concern. Whoever you speak to, they should listen and take your issue seriously.

You'd probably want to speak to a parent or coach first although sometimes you might prefer to tell someone not directly involved in your team, particularly if it's a sensitive matter.

Your Club Welfare Officer is there to deal with any concerns and works to ensure that all those involved at your club are protected.

You could also contact your County FA who have a Designated Safeguarding Officer whose job it is to help ensure anyone with a concern gets the help and support that they need.

Do you know who these people are and how you would contact them if you needed to?

## THE FA RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST STATEMENT

Everyone who works/volunteers with children and young people (anyone under the age of 18) is responsible and accountable for the way in which they behave towards them. Every child has a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

- It's expected that all adult-child relationships maintain clear boundaries at all times, are supportive, positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, development and progress. The adult-child relationships should all focus on the respective activity/event.
- No intimate or sexual relationship should take place while the member of staff or volunteer is in a position of trust relationship with a player.
- In addition, inappropriate, intimate or sexual relationships between an adult and a young player aged 16 and 17 may be unlawful, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation.

# The FA's Position

“It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to involve a child under that age in sexual activity where he or she is in a specified position of trust in relation to that child. This includes those who care for, advise, supervise or train children and young people (Sexual Offences Act 2003)”.

The principle of this section of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 is applied by The FA. Therefore, if you engage in an intimate or sexual relationship with a young player it is a breach of The Football Association Regulations and as such may result in disciplinary action and where appropriate a referral will be made to the statutory agencies, including the Police, and applicable Local Authorities bodies, for example, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Where a relationship of trust exists, it does not make any difference whether or not the relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of that relationship of trust.

# TAKING POSITIVE ACTION

- Maintain a relationship with all participants that are appropriate to your role and reflects positively on the organisation you work or volunteer for.
- As someone in a position of authority you should not seek or engage in sexual activity or sexualised communication with any U18s via social media including 16 or 17 year olds for whom you are responsible.
- If you think that a young person's behaviour indicates that they are seeking to develop or engage in an inappropriate relationship with you, immediately bring this to the attention of your Designated Safeguarding Officer or line manager. Be careful not to respond to the young person in any way that could be interpreted as encouraging them. Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.
- If you suspect an individual with a specified role in football is abusing a position of trust, or may abuse, you should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.
- If you feel your concern has not been dealt with appropriately, refer the matter directly to The FA Safeguarding Team via 0800 083 5902 or via email [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)
- Alternatively, you can seek advice from the 24 hour NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 500



# **Youth Voice & Volunteering**

# OPEN FORUMS

Using some of the methods outlined so far, an open forum could be created to bring people together in person or virtually to exchange ideas, be consulted on matters or give comments to help solve challenges currently being faced. Those involved should be of relevance to the matters being discussed, which should be outlined at the off-set so that anyone involved knows what they are to be a part of.

## Physical Meeting

- Find a central venue which has the space and requirements for the group.
- Ensure the venue is accessible.
- Provide any refreshments which might be necessary to make the environment more comfortable.
- Before inviting anyone, decide on the reason for hosting the Open Forum, what is the purpose for bringing people together?
- Ensure this purpose is communicated ahead of the session to ensure those involved know why they are attending and what they can expect.
- Set out expectations and boundaries for the discussion
- Use some of the methods outlined already to retrieve ideas and thoughts.
- If asking questions, try to keep them open [avoiding a 'yes' or 'no' answer].
- Ensure everything discussed is captured to then be reviewed.

## If you're planning to have a virtual forum

- Set a purpose for the session and reasoning for bringing people together which should be outlined prior to the forum.
- Select an appropriate platform for hosting the forum [Google Hangout, Microsoft Teams, Zoom etc.] Ensure a link to the platform is sent to those involved, via their parents if under 18.
- Set out expectations and boundaries for the discussion, and how the forum is set to work
- Raise topics you wish to discuss and allow time for thought before receiving answers.
- Ensure that everyone involved has a chance to speak, as sometimes individuals can hijack conversations leaving little space for others to contribute.
- Collate all of the responses and ideas, share how they will be used and next steps following the forum.

# YOUTH FORUMS & COUNCILS

An evolution of the youth ambassadors and open forum is to develop that into a Youth Council/ Forum. Who meet regularly to discuss matters impacting them and the club/league, sharing the thoughts of young people and developing tactics to improve the experience being had.

This group can be used as a sounding board for new ideas to ensure your organisation is relevant to the main stakeholders. The purpose of a youth forum is to create a method for young people to have a voice and be represented within the governance of your club or league.

Relating back to the Ladder of Participation, working through informing, consulting and adult initiated will help to start of the process of bringing people together and initially being adult led which in time can become a partnership, and towards youth led in the future.

**A Youth Forum within your organisation could feed into areas including:**

## Decision making

- Kit or badge for your Club Youth Forum
- Expansion of club and league activities
- Questions about the future of the club and format of football within the league
- New policy (E.g. anti-bullying policy)
- Supporters/coach behaviour and values

## Projects

- Creating a club/youth forum video
- Social media or website
- Running events
- Surveying players' experience at the club

## Ongoing- programmes

- Young coach mentors
- Club ambassadors
- Leadership programmes



# CONTINUED...

## Structure of your Youth Forum

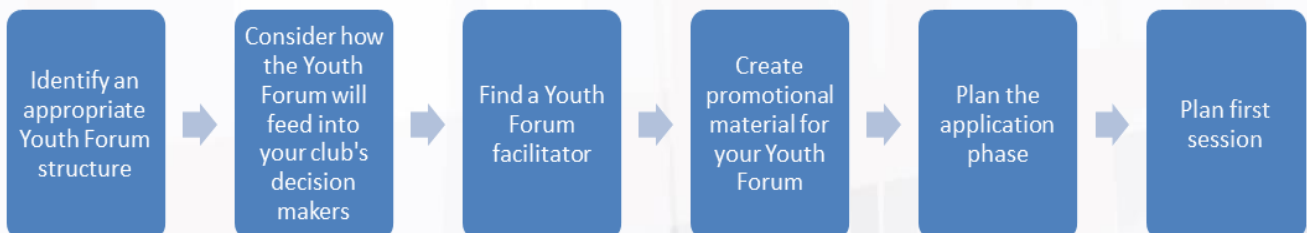
Understand what youth structure will suit your club or league - How will the ideas/thoughts feed to the decision makers? Your Youth Forum should benefit your club/ league and your young members; it will therefore look different depending on your needs. You know your club/league best and how you can implement the youth forum is up to you! Having a purpose for the Youth Forum is important so that the club/league, facilitator and members understand their role.

Consider what age range you would like in your group. Will there be a limit on numbers? How often will the group be meeting?

We expect that all Forums will have a channel into the decision-making committee. It is advisable to have a standing Youth Forum item on the agenda, but you may also consider having a representative on your committee or presentation at meetings delivered by Youth Forum members.

## Key to a successful Youth Forum...

Find an adult to act as the facilitator to oversee your Youth Forum. Ideally this individual will be passionate about inspiring young people to have an impact at your club. The facilitator will have to advocate for your young members. The facilitator must have a DBS if the meetings are regular.



## **Promotion of your Youth Forum**

Engaging young people and parents may be challenging. We advise you to focus your promotion on the benefits to the young person who will be involved, as well as benefits to the organisation and local community.

As a member of the Youth Forum, young people will develop:

- Leadership skills, through supporting and delivering projects
- Trusted relationships with the organisation and officials, ensuring issues are dealt with more effectively
- An increased ability to share their thoughts and ideas in an open forum
- Increased commitment and ownership of their club/ league and football experience
- Improved wellbeing

Most of all, they should have an empowering and fun experience!

## **Application for your Youth Forum**

You may consider creating a simple application form for membership of your Youth Forum. You might ask for their reasons for joining, or something they would like to change at the club/league. This will give you an indication of the ideas young people will bring to the table.

Despite having an application style process, all those interested should be involved and feel part of the Youth Forum.

# YOU SHOULD CONSIDER...

- The location of your meetings. What environment will allow for and if there would be any accessibility issues for members?
- The time and duration of your meetings. Ensure guardians have enough time to take their children to the meeting and they aren't too tired after school.
- A Code of Conduct will set expectations for the group. Creating this Code of Conduct as an activity together in the first meeting will give the young people some ownership and greater buy in.
- Ensure you have consent from parents prior to the first meeting.
- Consider how thoughts and ideas will be recorded. Ask your group whether they are happy for their views to be shared further, but also make sure they have space to say if they do not want a thought shared outside of the group.
- The confidence of the members - they may need some encouragement in suggesting ideas. It may be the first time they have been asked for their feedback.
- Your confidence- it may feel uncomfortable to share the power of decision making at first, but confidence will come with time.
- The expected outcomes of your Youth Forum.

## Preparation for first meeting

Make sure you have another adult alongside you for the meeting.

Highlight safeguarding to all the young people in attendance, in particular what they should do if they have any concerns they want to raise. Ensure they know who the Club/League Welfare Officer is.

Set the expectations clearly and be honest about limitations. Whilst young people will have plenty of ideas, you may need to be clear if finance will be a barrier, or whether an idea is not possible.

Depending on the time of day, some nibbles may be appreciated by your members!

To support the creation of a Youth Forum, a resource for this can be found alongside this booklet, giving you questions and tasks which could help with the early stages and providing a structure to get you started!

# **YOUTH REPRESENTATION ON THE CLUB / LEAGUE COMMITTEE**

## **Organisational Adoption**

How young people are adopted and viewed within your organisation matters. How their views are used and taken to the committee/ board can take a number of guises depending on what is right for you.

The different steps which could be taken to integrate young people onto your committee are outlined below:

## **Notes from the Youth Forum shared with the committee:**

Following any meeting of young people, either through a formal Youth Forum, Open Forum or other activities the notes and outcomes could be shared with the main committee for discussion and where necessary for decision.

## **Standing item on committee meeting agendas:**

Young people and their views could be a standing item on all Committee agendas, in the same way age group and manager updates are regular discussion items. Ensuring any issues or concerns from young people are given the opportunity to be raised.

## **Young people invited to share thoughts on agenda items:**

If meeting agendas are shared in advance, or specific topics are set to be raised you could invite young people to the main committee meeting to be a part of discussions on matters which impact them, or where their view and opinions would be appropriate.



## **Young people invited to observe committee meetings:**

Young people could take on a shadow role of attending committee meetings without the full responsibilities involved of being a Committee member. Being able to observe how the group functions, what is discussed and to gain an understanding of what is involved for future roles and opportunities.

## **Young person a member of the committee:**

A young person could take on the role of being a part of your club/ league committee. Either fulfilling a role already within the make-up of the group. Or through creating a new role, either to provide the voice of young people, or to bring a set of experience needed to support the sustaining and growth of the club/ league. What roles would be helpful to build on the expertise you already have, or what is missing from the skill set already in place?

## **Youth representative a position on the committee:**

Could a Youth Representative be a formal role within your committee, either held by a young people or an individual whose role it is to manage, lead and facilitate youth voice activities ensuring those views are brought back and discussed within Committee meetings?

Shropshire FA, League & County FA impact:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8f1p2UF-EvV0>





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*“I went along to a committee meeting and the committee made me feel welcome straight away. They often asked my opinions on matters which affected the league, and my perspective from a young player’s point of view was appreciated. I then started to represent the league at events, one at Lancashire FA and then the last two National Youth League Conferences”*

*- Cameron Connor - Youth Committee Member*

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## HOW ELSE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

Beyond routes to ensure young people have a voice on matters impacting them, they can also take on roles to keep the club or league alive and thriving!

Through Clubs & Leagues, grassroots football is the centre of our communities. Here are some ideas and options as to how you could allow young people to access and take on meaningful roles to support the club and league:

### Social Media

Social media is the epicenter for young people, the virtual world where so much takes place to keep people informed, excited and engaged with what is going on. Rather than trying to learn a whole new language of technology, give the reins to our young generation to utilise platforms which are high in use, to develop and create content which appeals to your target audience.

Used for different purposes, social media allows you to create platforms for communicating different messages. Facebook and WhatsApp are commonly used for team/ group conversations and discussions.

Instagram, Twitter and TikTok amongst other platforms are available to appeal to a different audience to share images, updates and news to connect with the wider world.



Beyond social media, have you considered other ways of using electronic media to widen your brand?

Audio, Video and Podcasting enables you to capture content to then be shared on social media channels.

Videos showing what the club/ league are about, events which take place and as a tool to attract more people to be a part of your organisation in any role or way.

Podcasting could provide an opportunity for young people to share their stories of how your club or league has impacted them, or speaking to other volunteers and coaches to share their journeys and what it is like to be involved in grassroots football.

## Written media

Everything doesn't have to be through technology, apps and new platforms. Written media, creating newsletters, articles, match reports can be done through the eyes and voice of those playing the game. If not through the current channels of communication, could there be a separate piece for young people created by young people to update members and individuals around what is going on, written in a way which engages them.

You might develop a blog, and share the responsibility of who writes weekly posts, allowing young people to raise topics and talk through experiences which are meaningful to them.





## Coaching/ Supporting training sessions

Young people have shown an appetite to give back, and support football through taking on coaching roles to lead sessions [when 18 or over], and supporting others to deliver sessions and help others to develop their football ability, and as people.

Young people are role models to others within your club or league, they represent what you are about and can help to inspire and support others on their football journey. The FA have launched The FA Playmaker. An online, 6 hour programme, which across the five modules hosts FA session plans, tried-and-tested techniques, as well as guidance on how to respond to medical emergencies. The FA Playmaker will show you how to:

- Get to know your players
- Recognise non-verbal cues
- Maximise your use of language and tone
- Improve active listening
- Encourage good discussion

All of it is ready-to-use and can be taken straight into any grassroots training session to make a positive difference alongside a fully-qualified volunteer. For those who wish to, there is then the opportunity to progress onto the coaching ladder starting with the FA Level 1 delivered locally.

There isn't an age for young people to be able to support football in this way, only restrictions around if they can be left alone with a group of players. Anyone under 18, and without the necessary qualifications should be operating alongside someone else who can support and lead.



## Fundraising, club support

Could you share some of the responsibility around fundraising, and managing club/ league support? Enable young people to develop projects and methods of raising awareness and funds for the organisation to operate and continue to thrive and provide opportunities.

Rather than trying to find someone new to volunteer, how could you use the resource already at hand to ensure there is a future for football. Through some of the methods outlined in this resource, ask young people for their ideas, thoughts and creations which they can then be a co-creator of alongside adults to bring to life.

Not only would this help the club or league in accessing funds and opportunities, but also develop young people as people. With opportunities to organise thoughts, manage priorities, develop plans and stick to a brief. Enhancing skills which football may already be teaching, of communication, teamwork and leadership which can be transferred off the pitch as well as on it.

Wyrley Juniors have created a Youth Committee, and outlined some of the ways young people have helped them so far in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tv4hEeTeQNU>



# Youth Voice



# HOW? QUESTIONNAIRES & SURVEYS

A quick and easy way to collect a large amount of information is through questionnaires and surveys, which allows you to ask open and closed questions, leading to both quantitative information (numbers and categories) and qualitative information (which is more descriptive). Using online apps such as Google Forms and Survey Monkey, questionnaires can be put together and shared with young people to complete themselves, or with the help of their parents.

Questionnaires which are short and quick to complete are preferred to long documents which can become tedious to fill in. When creating a questionnaire or survey, consider the thoughts of the young people completing them. Would they prefer a long list of questions needing a long answer, or a mix of checkbox and multiple-choice answers? What data are you looking to collate, is there space for responders to share a longer answer?

This method can give you access to new information quickly and easily, however the quality of the data is out of your control and up to how much the respondent wishes to share. Explaining why this data is being collected and being able to show the impact could be helpful to drive genuine responses.



## How can you build a survey or questionnaire?

- Google Forms and Survey Monkey are two free tools for creating an online questionnaire
- If using a paper form, simply using colour and graphics is a good start. Keeping them short and simple – with tick boxes, word circling, pictures and symbols as this is helpful for younger children
- You could choose to add in Emoji's for young people to share and capture their feelings and emotions by circling the emoji that reflects how they view the topic within the question.
- An individual from each team could be made responsible for sharing and collating the survey responses from their teammates.
- For some, they might be motivated to complete the questionnaire if there is a reward at the end of completion, a prize draw for example.

## What questions might be asked?

The format and questions being asked are dependent on the matter at hand, and information the club or league is looking to gather. Using language which is accessible will allow for more responses.

- What do you enjoy most about playing football for...?
- Is there anything which would make football more fun?
- How could the club ensure you are being listened to?
- What don't you like about playing football for...?
- Would you like to be able to learn more about different football roles?
- If you had the power to change one thing about your football experience, what would it be?
- How would you like to celebrate with your teammates at the end of the season?
- What would make match days more exciting?
- Do you feel supported by your coach/es?
- Do you know who the welfare officer is at the club, and what their role is?





## Comment Box

Here is our extension of our Comment Box which will become an ever-present for suggestions away from training and match days. Please add your name to your comment if you'd like us to follow up once we have looked to respond to your comment.

Your answer

Submit

## Comment Box

A comment box allows for feedback to be collected more frequently, or at times where thoughts and concerns might arise - as opposed to waiting for a survey/ questionnaire to express a number of views at once. This method is simple to set up which enables young people to share their views and feelings quickly and efficiently. As not all clubs or leagues have a clubhouse or central base, comment boxes could be the responsibility of an individual within the team to take to training sessions, or the comment box could be virtual. This could be a generic email address, or by setting up a Form/ survey link specifically for comments which remains open at all times.

# HOW CAN YOU IMPLEMENT USING A COMMENT BOX?

## For a physical comments box:

- Either buy or make a box that can be taken along to training sessions, matchdays or team activities which has a lid or way of posting notes.
- Make sure the box is visible and accessible with paper slips and pens available to be written on and shared.

## Other considerations:

- How could you share the responsibility of monitoring the comments box?
- Is there a process for how any comments will be handled? How will your young people know if their opinions are being taken seriously and discussed?

## For a virtual comments box:

- Create a generic email address only to be used for sending comments and thought to.
- Set up a survey link with a space for comments to be shared.
- If an email address or survey link is created, ensure it is someone's responsibility to check regularly and raise comments with the relevant individuals to create change.

# WALL OF THOUGHTS

Creating a wall for thoughts allows young people to take ownership of how they record and share their reflections, allowing for creativity with little input or direction from a coach or facilitator. When complete, photos can be taken, and thoughts written up to be shared in any future meetings to discuss any key themes or ideas.

Although not always condoned, writing on walls, this provides a different opportunity for young people to creatively display thoughts and feelings through words and images. Simply by adorning a roll of wallpaper across a wall or the floor, a space is created allowing young people, especially those of a younger age to release what they are thinking.

Creating a wall of thoughts doesn't have to be a one-time thing and could be put on the wall of a clubhouse or accessible at training venues to be added to at any time. If this activity is to be used to gather specific feedback, time could be allocated within training to allow for this. Returning to this or being able to add to it often might allow for deeper thoughts and contributions.

What materials will you need?

- Wallpaper/ Lining paper/ flipchart paper
- Adhesive - sellotape/ blue tack to attach the paper to a wall.
- Pens
- Post-it notes



# YOUTH AMBASSADORS & TEAM LEADERS

Progressing the responsibility of young players, you could give them representative status.

Team leaders or youth ambassadors, acting in the same way a class representative would, allows for there to be a point of contact for players to speak to, to raise any concerns or issues. This could be the same person or shared across a team throughout the season.

**The role of the Youth Ambassadors is to:**

- Be the point of contact for the team to raise concerns to.
- Listen to teammates and collate any feedback on matters the club or league are working through
- Feedback on any thoughts or concerns to the team coach/ welfare officer or relevant official.
- Act on behalf of their teammates when the organisation looks to make decisions.

For Youth Ambassadors to have an impact, their role must be defined by the club or league. What is their purpose, and what kind of issues should teammates be bringing to them?

Who do they report into and share any concerns with? And how, do the ambassadors meet, or does a club official speak to them asking for concerns or comments?

How does any feedback get reported into the club Board or Committee, with responses feedback to individuals after any decisions or actions are taken?

How do Youth Ambassadors feel valued? Or rewarded for the role they play within the organisation?

# **MYTH BUSTING & TOP TIPS**



# MYTH BUSTING

## **Everyone is already overworked! We're volunteers!**

Listening to and involving young people is our most important work, perhaps this could become a new role within the club or organisation as opposed to adding onto someone who is already playing their part.

## **It takes up time which could be invested elsewhere.**

The responses we've heard is that developing youth voice opportunities changes how organisations operate, and it should have happened sooner. Although creating new activity takes time, once established this will provide feedback and opportunities to ensure you are putting your major stakeholder at the heart of what you do.

## **What qualifications does someone need to lead this? Does it have to be the Welfare Officer?**

This does not have to be the role of the welfare officer, although they might want to be heavily involved. If activity is regular any individuals involved in leading this area would need to have an in-date DBS check, it would be good practice for them to hold the FA's Safeguarding Children qualification that is not mandatory.

## **This will cost money to facilitate.**

This doesn't have to cost money, and if it does that would be spent on a facility to host a meeting, for refreshments & snacks, for any resources - pens/ paper to write on and capture thoughts. Given current technology, there are methods to capture content and thoughts without a cost.

## **Young people are just trying to take over**

Young people are a part of your present and future, their views, skills and experiences are valid on all levels to ensuring you can provide relevant football opportunities and give them experiences to develop as people through the game. You get to decide the level of engagement, if they take over consider the ways to direct their energy rather than oppose it!

## **They don't know what is required to be involved, young people have no experience in running a club or league**

Perhaps they don't have experience in running a club or league, but they have experience in engaging with their peers, managing social and media platforms and at some point in the future might well be the people who learn to run a club or league. You can help them in sharing your experiences, remember you were a beginner once too.

## **They might only be involved for a short period of time before going off to university**

Volunteering shouldn't be a life sentence. Even if people move away, the time they can commit and volunteer should be welcomed with open arms and not pushed away. Young people will always be moving, and lives changing, however the opportunity to learn and grow through football has to always be a constant.

# TOP TIPS FOR INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CLUBS OR LEAGUES

## Start by looking around you

As a club or a league the biggest advantage you have is that you already have a potential group of young volunteers in your own membership.

## Truthful, accurate, honest - what's your offer?

Be clear on what help you want from young people. Talk directly. Provide a realistic description of what's required rather than use a job title or jargon. Offer roles identifying tasks or projects that need to be done.

“Help required for coaching, refereeing, awards night, website development, fundraiser, renovating a club house or hosting cup finals.”

Remember this is likely to be their first interaction with the world of work. Words such as committee, AGM, league officer is unfamiliar language and overwhelming.

## Remove barriers

Anticipate potential anxieties by explaining if travel expenses are covered, if training is provided and what commitment is required.



## What's in it for me?

Many young people will be looking for an opportunity to better themselves. To gain experience, learn a skill or even a qualification that helps with their personal or career progression. Much of the activity that takes place in a club or league can also be viewed as marketing, communications, management of events, sports administration, customer satisfaction. Just the sort of thing employees or universities are looking for in addition to academic qualifications.

## Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat?

Almost all young people are familiar with new technology, software and social media. A huge range of volunteering opportunities can be created easily with this as a springboard; get a young person to manage social media sites, blog regularly or make and edit videos, photos and publicity – all of which



## Smart Recruitment - Have you any local universities, colleges or schools with 6th forms?

There are likely to be students studying relevant subject areas to your volunteering opportunity. If so – contact departments and course tutors to promote your opportunity and sell it to teachers or lecturers as an opportunity for students to gain real life practical experience. There are many universities with course requirements that their students spend time working in the local community. Get your club or league on the list of potential placements or projects

## Take the time to train young people

Once they are up and running check back in with them. Give them a clear and approachable point of contact. Don't forget to prepare current staff and volunteers for working with young people – First impressions count and sometimes a grumpy or patronising response with other volunteers can put young people off for good.

## Try before you buy

Allow young volunteers to try out a job or task before they commit. Getting young people involved might require providing taster sessions for them or an initial short term involvement. This approach can reduce fears people might have about the role, their competence to do it or that they are going to get stuck doing something lame.



## **Everyone likes a pat on the back occasionally**

Sounds obvious, but we all like to be appreciated. Does your club or league have an awards evening in which you could include young people? Could you nominate a young person for one of The FAs or CFAs volunteering awards?

## **Be proud of what you're doing**

If clubs and leagues shout about what they are doing to support young volunteers, it will gradually become more acceptable to include young volunteers, and we can learn from one another's experiences. Use newsletters, social media and local schools or youth groups to publicise your good work.

## **Don't let concerns about insurance or welfare policies put you off**

Clubs and leagues will already have insurance policies and welfare practices that cover the involvement of young people. Tweak your policy if necessary but if you follow existing approaches and sensible protocols that apply to U18s then nothing additional should be required.

## **Would you do it?**

Youth volunteering has to be more than putting up the nets or car park marshalling. Whilst these are jobs that need to be done in any club be careful to offer more than just the routine tasks. If they are not motivating to you then they are unlikely to motivate others. You could mix up some of the less interesting tasks with others to make the roles more enjoyable.

## **Go Dutch? What hidden skills can you reveal?**

Knowledge of the skills and networks you have within your membership can mean that you're able to do much more together than you ever thought possible. Your club or league could benefit from undertaking a 'skills' audit of your members. This can be incorporated into the membership process whereby members are asked what they do for a living and whether they have a particular skill or interest. Undertaking this exercise can reveal that you have a carpenter or physiotherapist, someone studying a Sports Development course or members who can help maintain the website or social media channels. This is the approach taken by many Dutch Community Clubs; if you sign up as a member you are required to commit to a number of volunteer hours.



# **Around the grounds..**

**Case Studies**

# CASE STUDY ONE - WYRLEY JUNIORS CLUB

Wyrley Juniors is a grassroots football club that understands the benefits of incorporating young people within the club into the decision-making process, and has embraced that challenge.

The club has demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding its own positive future. In doing so, it is providing the young people involved with vital skills for their own futures, both inside and outside football. They have also eased the workload on existing administrative volunteers.



## HOW?

The club launched the new youth committee. This mirrors the main committee with each youth committee member linked to the main committee for support and advice.

The youth committee members collect feedback from players on their thoughts, hopes and concerns on the club's present and future. They meet together, discuss, and take forward ideas to the main committee to enable decision-making that represents all at the club.

The youth committee also plan fundraising and volunteering ideas to establish the club as a positive force in the local community.

They produce a half-termly newsletter to share ideas and success with everybody at the club.



*'The workload of the club was being shared by the few, and so we embarked upon a period of identifying assistants to help with succession planning and reallocating jobs within the committee. To help that task and ensure new ideas and wider involvement, we launched a youth committee to increase the loyalty of young people and give them ownership of their club.'*

*Each youngster has committed fully to this initiative (impressive when some are in the middle of GCSEs) and the impact is being felt immediately. I am confident it will grow further and become an integral part of the club.'*

*- Keith Hardy Chairman of Wyrley Juniors FC*



# What did they do?

A football fun day for an inner-city church youth group:

The Church group struggles to find free open space to host events and activities; the youth committee believes the club's home ground would be the perfect space in which to host an event. Crucially, they believe this is a partnership that could be expanded in the future.

An afternoon tea for local elderly residents:

The youth committee secured funding from an ASDA store and other local businesses to provide the refreshments to host an afternoon tea event for local elderly residents, including relatives of young people within the club. This demonstrates awareness that a grassroots football club can be the heart of a local community, even with non-sporting initiatives.

A litter pick in local area:

Planned by the youth committee as an easy and effective way of giving back to the local community, and making a tangible difference. Local residents seeing the young players helping in such a way improves the goodwill towards the club instantly.

Setting up a youth committee Instagram page:

Crucially allows the young people within the club to be represented on a platform that is designed for their demographic. This helps to create a sense of community within the club that will increase loyalty and ownership. Evidencing the positive work done by the youth committee will also increase the likelihood of others wanting to get involved.

Importantly, all of the above are tangible, real-world actions that make a difference to the local community and demonstrate the potential within young people to get involved in helping make that difference.

# CASE STUDY TWO – SHROPSHIRE FA YOUTH COUNCIL

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*As a youth council we invest in running events by young people for young people; to inspire and empower the next generation of football volunteers whilst also providing opportunities to develop and lay the foundations of fundamental skills transferable to numerous aspects of life.*

*- Holly Davies Chair of Shropshire County FA Youth Council*

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What are the aims of the Shropshire FA Youth Council's work?

- Empower the next generation of football volunteers.
- Use football as a basis to provide young people with fundamental, transferable skills.
  - Engage young people to take ownership of the future of their football clubs and the game in general.
  - Educate young people on some of the football's core disciplines and the potential opportunities within these disciplines.
- Spread the message that football is for all and welcomes all.



**SHROPSHIRE F.A.**

# What do they do?

The Shropshire FA Youth Council invest in running a range of football events and activities for young people, organised and managed by young people. They cover many different aspects of the game, on and off the pitch. The events and workshops run by youth council members for other young people used external speakers such as professional referees and coaches to give expert advice.

The initial day was so successful it has expanded with greater ambitions and sessions. Rather than a one-day event, it is now five events across the year to engage a wider and larger audience.

The growth of the event indicates both the appetite of young people to learn the skills provided by the events, and the quality and enjoyment of the sessions. The extension of the programme will help create a model that could be rolled out across the country.

## Innovations:

The youth council felt it appropriate to implement a reward system to incentivize attendance at their events. They organised a presentation evening to take place at the end of their five event days. All attendees of any event are invited to the presentation evening, where their involvement is recognised by the youth council.

## Development:

Thanks to the success of the youth council's work, many of its members have been given additional opportunities to support clubs, leagues and the county FA. They sit on committees to pass on their knowledge and experience, support campaigns such as Kick It Out and Rainbow Laces and have attended the FA National Leadership Academy and national referee development days.

# CASE STUDY THREE - SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE

What were the aims of the Sheffield and District Junior League?

Sheffield and District Junior League is one of the biggest youth leagues in the country, and a league that has truly embraced the importance of engaging young people within its structure. There has been a deliberate movement to integrate youth to the administrative side of the league, a recognition that the league - and the game - has to build a platform for the next generation.

Only by bringing in young people into those processes can they feel ownership of the league and in doing so feel represented. By promoting the notable success stories within the league they can enthuse others to follow their lead

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*'I am able to give my views from the perspective of a player and now referee and coach. I love being involved in the Committee, helping to shape the future of the game and I think people can see that I do have useful things to say regarding Youth Football.'*

*I think it is important that other youth players get involved in the running of football because it is vital that the decision makers in the leagues listen to the youth voice who are involved. At the end of the day it is our game, and our opinions count.'*

- Cameron Connor Youth committee member

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# CAMERON CONNOR

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*'I went along to a committee meeting and the committee made me feel welcome straight away. They often asked my opinions on matters which affected the league, and my perspective from a young player's point of view was appreciated. I then started to represent the league at events, one at Lancashire FA and then the last two National Youth League Conferences.'*

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At the age of 10, Cameron attended the FA Skills programme. The lead coach was so impressed with his maturity when speaking about the game he suggested him as a candidate for the Sheffield & Hallamshire County FA Youth Council. Although too young to take part on that council, Cameron was offered the chance to join the Sheffield and District Junior League youth committee.

Cameron was consulted on issues that affected the league and its players. He was asked to speak to a panel of FA staff and delegates at the National Youth Leagues conference at St George's Park, and represented the league at events nationwide.

One of the most rewarding aspects of Cameron's experience is how attitudes towards him have changed. At his first FA conference, some attendees might have wondered who the young child was at an adults' meeting. By the second year, Cameron was welcomed and championed by all. As soon as he started engaging with people, they understood that he had valuable ideas and an experience of football as a young player that they needed to rely upon when making plans that would affect Cameron and his peers.

Cameron has been accepted to become part of the FIFA Fan Movement, a group of around 450 football supporters who are selected to contribute to fan issues that affect the game worldwide.

# RYAN LEWIS

Ryan, now 21, has been involved in the Sheffield and District Junior League for around five years.

He began as an age-group registrar, supporting the league secretary in arranging fixtures, helping organise referees and assisting clubs and club personnel with any issues that may arise.

Ryan's work earned individual praise from clubs in the league, who recognised that the help and assistance he provided merited special credit.

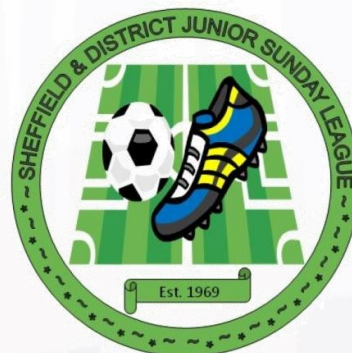
Ryan was invited to attend The FA's Youth Leadership Academy as part of his work, in order to gain a greater understanding of processes within the game and further his development.

In May 2019, Ryan was appointed as league secretary for the Sheffield and District Junior League despite his tender age. This was recognition for his tireless work and enthusiasm and was well received by the clubs in the league.

## NEXT STEPS

The league is planning a Youth Onside conference, to which players from across the league will be invited.

The players will be canvassed for their opinions on matters, and potentially recruited to get involved in the work of the league. The idea is to stress to young people their importance in taking the league forward in the future and giving them ownership of something dear to them.



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*The Sheffield and District Junior League is where I have played the most enjoyable football of my life. I wanted to give something back to the league and be part of the process in making football enjoyable for other players as well.*

*I would encourage anyone to take on voluntary positions with their local league for the rewarding feelings it provides and the experience that can be gained from it.*

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# CASE STUDY FOUR - CORNWALL FA

Youth Onside has been set up by Cornwall County FA as a project to encourage clubs to listen to young people and make meaningful changes based on their ideas.

The County have created a tiered system which rewards clubs for getting more youth 'onside' and embedding a culture of listening across the club structure. What is the aim of Youth Onside?

Youth Onside aims to incorporate young people into the decision-making process in Grassroots clubs. Giving young people ownership of the direction of their club increases their loyalty to it and pride in it, and also allows them to understand the necessary administrative processes within the grassroots game.

It aims to provide young people with the chance to help shape the future of their club. It uses a reward system to motivate other clubs to follow the lead of their peer clubs.

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*The fact that we had 100% attendance from all the leaders suggests to me that the youngsters are finding this process very rewarding. As a club we are really looking forward to developing the Youth Onside group, in particular the lead representative will be attending Committee meetings, leading Youth Onside meetings and getting involved with younger player training sessions.*

*- Hannah Martin Falmouth Community Youth Welfare Officer*

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# Why should clubs sign up?

Clubs will be encouraged that the young people within their clubs are enthused about the future of the club with them as important stakeholders. They will see the benefits of the transparency of decision making and have greater confidence that they are meeting the needs of young people within their clubs.

In addition, a reward scheme exists to recognise their work in empowering the young people within their clubs:

- Digital resource package
- Certificate
- Youth volunteer leadership guides
- Leadership resources
- Local professional club match tickets
- £50 voucher for a course of the clubs choice
- Youth Leadership CPD to be delivered by a County Mentor at the club

# How?

Across the various clubs Youth Onside has:

- Appointed a youth representative to be a spokesperson for the club.
- Youth representative gathers feedback from young people this is collated and given to a designated person.
- The club uses feedback to make realistic changes to operational decisions.
- Youth representative feeds back to the young people the changes that have been made due to their voice.
- Some clubs have taken it a step further and appointed a youth representative onto the main committee who has a vote on club decisions based on their youth feedback.
- Another club has appointed a full youth committee to run and feed into the main committee.

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*‘The youth committee children  
relate to me as a role model  
because I have grown up through  
the age groups and experienced  
negative and positive outcomes  
through playing football’*

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# What have clubs achieved?

## FALMOUTH COMMUNITY

- Full youth working group implemented, closely supported by Club Welfare Officer.
- Feedback from young people within the club that they love feeling that they have representation within the club. They are now more than just players.

## ST. DAY YOUTH

- Full youth working group implemented.
- Countless changes made to club operation following feedback.
- Club has created culture of listening with buy-in at all levels within its structure.

## MOUSEHOLE

- Youth Representative appointed and given key role on the club's committee.
- Youth Representative used as the go-between for the youngsters in the club and the club's administration.
- Club is already in the process of expanding initiative by establishing a youth working group and achieving Tier 1 status.

# CASE STUDY FIVE – OLDHAM ATHLETIC GIRLS' & WOMEN'S YOUTH COUNCIL

Oldham Athletic Girls and Women's FC, An all girls club with teams from ages U8s through to U18s. To find members within the club who were interested in starting a Youth Council.

At the outset, we advertised for two players per team, with the idea to create a balanced and fair team of 10 girls across all ages.

The initial response was heavily from the older group (U18s) and a few younger ones.

So, we accepted all the girls that where interested giving us 4 U18 players, 2 U12 players, 1 U10 and 1 U8 player as part of our first ever Youth Council.



OLDHAM ATHLETIC GIRLS & WOMEN FC

## PLAYERS YOUTH COUNCIL

Join Our Youth Council! We Want To Hear Your Voice!

**ARE YOU INTERESTED?**  
**2 PLAYERS PER TEAM CAN JOIN**  
**NOMINATE YOURSELF TO YOUR**  
**COACH!**

*"It's fun to speak to the older players at the club who we don't usually talk to and see them as role models for the future. I like it because we can have a voice for the girls in our teams which encourages more girls to talk. I also like to help to create fundraising ideas for the club to have an impact."*

*-Holly, U8*



# Purpose

The purpose of the group is to provide a voice in the club for the people that the committees decisions affect the most.

It is also there to help build on the confidence of the girls involved who can then inspire their peers. This group could be the first time they've ever had an opportunity to have their voice heard and feel more a part of the club and the decisions that get made.

In addition, the plan overtime is to work on team building, leadership, communication and what opportunities can become available beyond this group and the club through taking part in the youth council.

This group of players will represent the ideas and opinions of their fellow teammates across the club.



## What's Next?

This is just the start of the Youth Council for OAGWFC. Going forward we plan to implement youth voice into club decisions from those it affects the most ... the players!

The 8 girls involved will be the ones to find out what their fellow teammates think and want for their club which they will feed into the committee.

We also plan on doing activities and tasks that will benefit and upskill the girls involved outside of football, especially the U18s who are in college/university transition periods.

The U18s buddying up with a younger player will also help the younger girls have a role model they can really connect with and learn from.

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*“I think it's great that we get a voice because sometimes players have opinions that they don't want to share with a coach as they may be shy. So now that we have a youth council, players can talk amongst themselves and share their opinions with each other and put forward their ideas. I also think it's a good way to attract more players because if a young girl sees what we are about with engaging as young leaders at the club it may make them feel more comfortable joining the club knowing they can play an important role. I also think it will make more parents be interested in getting their children involved in the club. I joined the youth council in the hope to help project the players voices and make our club better in ways that coaches may not think of. I also joined it in the hope that I can now socialise with the younger age groups more and act as a role model towards them. I want to bring the club together so we are more of a family. I have gelled with my team really well and I want my team to feel like they can do the same with the younger teams. When I first joined, I trained with the under 16's at the time and I was only maybe 10 years old so I know exactly how it feels to be surrounded by the older girls, so I want to make the younger girls feel more comfortable. I joined wanting to make friends and I have certainly made many friends for life”*

*-Rebecca, U18*

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# FURTHER READING

- Club Youth Forums, How to Guide
- <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/youth/youth-leadership-and-volunteering>





**FOR**  
**ALL**